

## IN CLAIMS

Please amend claims 12, 18, 22, and 23 as follows:

12 (currently amended). A method of manufacturing an integrated circuit, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) forming features on a substrate, the features protruding from the substrate to create creases adjacent the features;
- (b) depositing a layer of non-dielectric material over the features and the creases;
- (c) removing a portion of the layer of non-dielectric material, leaving stringers of the non-dielectric material in the creases; and
- (d) converting the stringers of non-dielectric material in the creases into a dielectric material, wherein the volume occupied by the stringer increases when converted into the dielectric material.

13 (original). The method, as set forth in claim 12, wherein step (a) comprises the step of forming gate electrodes protruding from the substrate.

14 (original). The method, as set forth in claim 12, wherein step (b) comprises the step of depositing a layer of silicon over the features and the creases.

15 (original). The method, as set forth in claim 12, wherein step (c) comprises the step of etching the portion of the layer of non-dielectric material.

16 (original). The method, as set forth in claim 12, wherein step (d) comprises the step of

oxidizing the stringers.

17 (original). The method, as set forth in claim 12, wherein step (d) comprises the step of nitridizing the stringers.

18 (currently amended). A method of manufacturing an integrated circuit, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) forming features on a substrate, the features protruding from the substrate to create creases adjacent the features;
- (b) depositing a layer of non-dielectric material over the features and the creases;
- (c) removing a portion of the non-dielectric material from the creases using a given method, the given method leaving ~~undesirable~~ residual non-dielectric material in some of the creases; and
- (d) converting the ~~undesirable~~ residual non-dielectric material in the creases into a dielectric material, wherein the volume occupied by the dielectric material exceeds the volume occupied by the residual non-dielectric material.

19 (original). The method, as set forth in claim 18, wherein step (a) comprises the step of forming gate electrodes protruding from the substrate.

20 (original). The method, as set forth in claim 18, wherein step (b) comprises the step of depositing a layer of silicon over the features and the creases.

21 (original). The method, as set forth in claim 18, wherein the given method comprises

an etching method.

22 (currently amended). The method, as set forth in claim 18, wherein step (d) comprises the step of oxidizing the ~~undesirable~~ residual non-dielectric material.

23 (currently amended). The method, as set forth in claim 18, wherein step (d) comprises the step of nitridizing the ~~undesirable~~ residual non-dielectric material.